



---

# Foreword

---

Hospitality comes in many forms. When we first moved to Birmingham to teach at Beeson Divinity School, Virginia stayed behind in San Diego to sell our home. Brad and Wendy Allison didn't know me, but they heard from a friend that I needed a place to stay. They opened up their basement apartment to me free of charge and graciously provided a home away from home for seven months. Their love and generosity made the transition possible, and I am grateful for their hospitality.

Over the years, table fellowship with students, friends and family has been a forum for spiritual formation. Following the weekly chapel at Beeson, students and faculty meet for a community lunch subsidized by the school. I am sure the combination of worship and eating together is more valuable than we realize. For the last three years, our life in Birmingham has been richer because our daughter Kennerly and her husband Patrick lived with us as they completed their seminary education. At least twice





## TABLE GRACE

a week we ate dinner together. We spent hours around the dinner table processing biblical studies, preaching, church life and pastoral theology. Eating and prayer go together. The table is the place where theology and ministry get worked into real life.

For the past year, Virginia and I have travelled to New York City every weekend to preach and pastor at Central Presbyterian Church. The church provided a one-bedroom apartment for our use, which made it possible to carry on this ministry. In New York we have enjoyed numerous meals with the church family. One of the elders, Jim Johnson, has the gift of hospitality. He has brought us together over dinner many times to enjoy fellowship and to discuss the church.

The Lord's hospitality extends from welcoming friends to skilled editors such as Jim Meals, Jason Fincher, and especially Rebecca Rine who have freely shared their gifts and made this a better book. The origins of this work go back to the faithful believers of First Presbyterian Church of San Diego who for fourteen years demonstrated a true receptivity to the Word of God. Their love for the Word and Christ encouraged me to be a better pastor and writer. In the end, the effectiveness of this book depends upon the hospitality of the reader. May God's grace open our minds and hearts to the beauty of his truth even if the writer, doesn't use enough seasoning.